

Breast Cancer Awareness: Understanding Your Risk

All women are at risk of developing breast cancer, and although this disease is predominantly found in women, men may also develop breast cancer. “Understanding your risk for breast cancer is significant when it comes to prevention and early detection,” says Andrea Nason, RN, OCN, breast health navigator at Bayview Breast Care at UPMC Hamot. “By understanding your risk, you can work with your provider to develop a treatment plan for risk reduction strategies and surveillance that is tailored for you. That can be empowering!”

While nothing will guarantee that you will not get breast cancer, having an individualized plan may mean that if you do develop cancer, it may be found much earlier and be more likely to be treated successfully.

Understanding your risk includes:

- **Talking to your provider**, who can help you by evaluating your personal and family history of breast cancer.
- **Knowing your family history** by finding out about history of breast and related cancers such as ovary, pancreatic, melanoma, and prostate cancer, as well as other cancers. This information is valuable to your provider in evaluating your risk.
- **Have a risk assessment.** If you think you may be at increased risk for developing breast cancer, it may be helpful to have a high risk consultation with experts who specialize in high risk patients and can provide a comprehensive evaluation, education, counseling, and management, as well as a personalized treatment plan. Consider a risk assessment if you have:
 - Personal history of breast biopsies showing atypical cells or lobular carcinoma in situ (LCIS), abnormal cells that grow in the milk glands
 - Family history of breast cancer, especially multiple members under the age of 50
 - History of ovary cancer or a close relative with ovary cancer (child, sibling, aunt or grandmother)
 - Male breast cancer or have a male relative with breast cancer
 - Known breast cancer related gene mutation in your family
 - History of radiation exposure to the chest area as a child or young adult for treatment for another cancer
 - Family history of breast or ovarian cancer and you are of Eastern European (Ashkenazi Jewish descent)
- **Be Proactive.** Remember, when it comes to breast cancer prevention, you are part of the team!

For more information about breast health services at UPMC Hamot, [visit our web site](#).